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ABSTRACT

In response to Taiwan's policy changes concerning university freshman English courses for non-majors, which allowed students to use the courses to fulfill a language requirement, a study investigated course characteristics (credit hours, laboratory requirements, midterm and final examinations, and teacher qualifications) and whether these course aspects meet student, teacher, and administrator expectations. Eighteen English Programs For Non-English Majors coordinators from 17 universities in Taiwan were interviewed about their programs, and three groups of subjects (178 teachers, 1,086 freshmen, and 382 graduates) were asked to respond to needs assessment questionnaires. Results indicate a good match between what was implemented in the programs and what was desired by the parties involved concerning the lab course hours and exams used in the courses. However, a mismatch was found between expectation and reality in the course credit hours and teachers' academic background. Implications for program development are discussed. (Contains 9 references.) (MSE)

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ED 419 404

Are Freshman English Programs for Non-English Majors at Universities in Taiwan Meeting the Expectation of Students and Teachers?

by

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Abstract

In 1993, the Ministry of Education mandated a policy that made the Freshman English for Non-English Majors (FENM) course one of the foreign languages freshmen could take to fulfill the language requirement. Students with a high level of proficiency were also allowed to take advanced English to replace FENM. The number of credits FENM carried per year was also reduced from eight to six. This has caused some programs to reassess the effectiveness of their FENM programs. Therefore, this study intends to look into the FENM programs implemented in the 1995 academic year regrading the following issues: (1) How many class hours does the FENM course carry? Do the programs meet the expectation of the parties involved in this aspect? (2) How many class hours does the FENM Lab course carry? Do the programs meet the expectation of the parties involved in this aspect? Is FENM Lab offered as part of the FENM course? (3) Are standardized mid-term and final exams used in FENM? Do the programs meet the expectation of the parties involved in this aspect? (4) What kinds of academic background do FENM teachers have? Do their backgrounds meet the expectation of the parties involved?

Eighteen EPNM coordinators from 17 universities in Taiwan were interviewed about their programs. In addition, three groups of subjects--178 EPNM teachers, 1086 university freshmen, and 382 university graduates--were asked to respond to needs assessment questionnaires. The findings showed that there was a good match between what was implemented in the programs and what was desired by the parties involved concerning the number of hours the FENM Lab courses carried as well as the exams used in the FENM courses. However, there was a mismatch between reality and expectation regarding the number of hours the FENM courses carried and FENM teachers' academic backgrounds. Implications are discussed in terms of the nature of the problems the FENM programs had and ways to close the gap between expectation and reality.

Keywords: Curriculum design, EFL curriculum, ESL curriculum, needs assessment, curricular description

Introduction

The English Programs for Non-English Majors (EPNM) have always been a concern for many EFL researchers and teachers in Taiwan. In 1993, a mandate from the Ministry of Education (MOE) stipulated that the **Freshman English for Non-English Majors (FENM)** course would no longer be a requirement but would only be one of the foreign language courses freshmen had to take to fulfill their language requirement. According to this mandate, students who had a high level of English proficiency or an interest in another foreign language would be allowed to take an advanced English course or another foreign language to replace **FENM**. The **FENM** credits were also reduced from eight to six, even though individual universities were given leeway to make adjustments. Therefore, there is a need to examine what **FENM** curricula are implemented, and whether the curricula meet the needs of students.

Since the credits carried by the **FENM** course have been reduced, it is important to investigate whether this reduction is what students and teachers want. The number of hours that should be carried by the **FENM Lab** course, which is often part of **FENM**, also needs to be reassessed. Another issue concerns testing in the FENM course. In the past, sometimes teachers without TEFL training were hired because there were not enough teachers with appropriate training in Taiwan. As a result, many programs retained a degree of control over their teachers by having them use the standardized textbooks chosen by the programs and midterm and final exams written by the program testing committees, with a view of ensuring teaching quality. Since more teachers have a TEFL background and are able to make their own pedagogical decisions now, increasingly more programs are giving their teachers autonomy in teaching. Therefore, it is important to find out whether the tradition of using standardized exams is still around. In addition, since the academic backgrounds of teachers affect their performance, the issue of what qualifications they have also deserves examination.

Therefore, the research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How many class hours do university freshmen, university graduates, and EPNM teachers think the **FENM** course should carry? How many hours does it actually carry in the programs implemented?

2. How many class hours do university freshmen, university graduates, and EPNM teachers think the **FENM Lab** course should carry? How many hours does it actually carry in the programs implemented? Is it part of the **FENM** course in most programs?

3. What are the attitudes of the previously mentioned subjects toward allowing FENM teachers to design their own midterm and final exams? Are **FENM** teachers allowed to do so in the actual programs implemented?

4. What are the attitudes of the previously mentioned subjects toward the academic backgrounds of **FENM** teachers? What kinds of background do **FENM** teachers have in the actual programs implemented?

It is hoped that this study will provide insights into ways of improving Taiwan's **FENM**

programs.

Review of the Literature

Studies have been conducted about the EPNM programs at universities in Taiwan, with a view of providing useful information for improving these programs. Some of these studies are descriptions of programs implemented at universities, and others are needs assessment studies that attempted to examine the nature of the programs desired by people involved in these programs, such as teachers and students.

The issue of how many hours the **FENM** and **FENM Lab** courses carry has been investigated. According Chang (1992), the **FENM** course for the Colleges of Sciences and Engineering and Foreign Languages at Fujen University carried 8 credits per year, 4 for the reading and writing component, and 4 for conversation. The results of a needs assessment survey reported in this study showed that most of the chairpersons and teachers in the College of Sciences and Engineering felt that **FENM** should carry 6 credits per year, with 4 devoted to basic English and 2 to ESP, but for majors of languages other than English, the ESP component should be an elective. On the other hand, the **FENM Lab** course was a 0-credit 2-hour required course (Chang, 1987). Kuo et al. (1990) reported that since 1981, at Chiaotung University, **FENM** had been a required 4-credit 5-hour course in each of the two semesters, and it included two hours of **FENM Lab**. The results of Kuo et al.'s needs assessment survey showed that 66.7% of the teachers teaching subjects other than English and 82.0% of the students felt that **FENM** should be divided into four 2-credit courses (**Listening Training, Conversation, Reading, and Writing**), and students should be required to choose three of them. Lin et al. (1996) indicated that at Chengchi University, the **FENM** course was three hours per week. So far, there has not been an island-wide study about the number of credits the **FENM** and **FENM Lab** courses carried after the 1993 MOE mandate. In addition, very little research has examined the status of the **FENM Lab** course, i.e., whether it is part of the **FENM** course and whether it is required or not at the universities.

Regarding the exams used in **FENM** classes, according to Chang (1992), before 1992, many universities used standardized mid-term and final exams. Tunghai university was an example, according to Haakenson et al. (1992). However, there seemed to be a trend away from this and a tendency to allow teachers to design their own exams in order to match their individual teaching methods or instructional materials. Chengchi University gave up standardized exams in 1989 (Lin, 1994), and this has remained in practice ever since (Lin et al., 1996). So far, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies have examined students' or teachers' attitudes towards using standardized exams in **FENM**. Research on this issue is needed.

Some studies have described other aspects of the **FENM** programs in some detail. Haakenson et al. (1992) introduced the **FENM** program implemented at Tunghai in the 1992 academic year. Lin (1994) described the same program at Chengchi University and introduced the nature of the **FENM** courses offered. Lin et al. (1996) described the differences between the teaching objectives, methods, and materials used at the same university before and after 1993. Chang (1987) described the **FENM** programs in the College of Foreign Languages and

College of Science and Engineering at Fujen University. Kuo et al. (1990) gave a description of the FENM program at Chiaotung University. However, none of these studies looked into the academic backgrounds of FENM teachers or what kind of backgrounds these teachers are expected to have.

As discussed earlier, not enough research has been conducted to address the issues raised in this study. In addition, all the studies mentioned above targeted only one single university and, as far as the researcher knows, hardly any island-wide study has been conducted to give a comprehensive picture of the FENM programs in Taiwan. Therefore, there is a need for this current study.

Methods

This study is part of a larger study conducted by the researcher and Dr. Meei-ling Liaw to find out what kinds of EPNMs were implemented in the 1995 academic year in Taiwan and whether these programs met the expectations of university freshmen, university graduates, EPNM teachers, and teachers teaching subjects other than English. There were 20 universities in Taiwan in 1995, and within each one there were one or two EPNMs. In this larger study, the researchers surveyed only 17 universities and excluded three teachers' universities, because the purpose of the research was to investigate universities which served a general purpose. Teachers' universities, which aim specifically to train teachers, might have a different focus for their FENMs and therefore were excluded. At these 17 universities, there were 18 EPNMs. In this report, each of these 18 programs is referred to by the name of the particular university where it was offered. These programs were Soochow (Soochow University), Fujen (A) (Fujen Catholic University, the College of Liberal and Fine Arts), Fujen (F+S) (Fujen Catholic University, the Colleges of Foreign Languages, Natural Sciences, Life Science, and Engineering), Taiwan U. (Taiwan University), Chinese Culture (Chinese Culture University), Chengchi (Chengchi University), Tamkang (Tamkang University), Central U. (Central University), Chungyuan (Chungyuan Christian University), Tsinghua (Tsinghua University), Chiaotung (Chiaotung University), Tunghai (Tunghai University), Chungcheng (Chungcheng University), Providence (Providence University), Fengchia (Fengchia University), Chunghsing (Chunghsing University), Chengkung (Chengkung University), and NSYSU (Sun Yat-Sen University). In most of these EPNMs, the FENM and FENM Lab courses were the major part of the curricula, with some advanced English and ESP courses offered on the side.

In order to understand the FENM programs offered in 1995, the EPNM coordinators were interviewed and also asked to send in their program descriptions. The interviews were conducted on the phone or in person in the spring and summer of 1996, and the conversations were tape-recorded. To ensure that the researcher had presented the data accurately, the first draft of the Results and Discussion section of this report was sent to the 18 coordinators for confirmation. Based on the coordinators' feedback, the draft was revised. This method, called insider checking, was recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1983).

The data about the views of university freshmen, university graduates, and EPNM teachers about what kinds of FENM programs were needed came from a large-scale needs

assessment survey conducted by the researcher and Dr. Meei-ling Liaw in 1995, as mentioned previously. In the larger study, four questionnaires were respectively designed for university freshmen, university graduates, EPNM teachers, and teachers teaching subjects other than English. University graduates who graduated from universities not more than three years ago were chosen to ensure that their FENM experiences were not too outdated to be relevant to the programs implemented in 1995.

The coordinators and some teachers in the 18 EPNMs surveyed helped the researcher distribute and collect freshman and EPNM teacher questionnaires. In total, 1252 copies of freshmen questionnaire were handed out and 1086 were returned, with a return rate of 86.7%. Four hundred and sixteen copies of the EPNM teacher questionnaire were distributed and 178 of them returned, achieving a return rate of 42.7%. Three thousand and two hundred copies of the graduate questionnaire were sent out by mail, and 382 copies returned, with a return rate of 12.3%. The statistical software used to analyze the data was SPSS PC+.

The questionnaires used in the needs assessment survey of this study used a scale of four instead of five, i.e., without a middle point for subjects who did not have either a positive or negative attitude towards an issue. This was done in order to prevent subjects from resorting to checking the middle point when they were too lazy to figure out their attitudes. However, the researcher was aware that the lack of a middle point might have caused a problem for subjects who actually took a neutral stand on a certain issue. The reader of this report should take this into consideration when interpreting findings.

Results and Discussion

Each of the following sections answers one of the research questions mentioned previously.

Ideal Number of Hours for FENM Courses (excluding FENM Lab component)

The number of hours FENM (excluding the FENM Lab component) should carry, as perceived by the freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers, are shown in Table 1. The question in the needs assessment questionnaires that the subjects responded to is shown under the table title.

Table 1: Perception of Ideal Number of Hours Per Week for the FENM Course
Statement: Please fill in the ideal number of hours for Freshman English classes per week: ___ hours. (Please disregard the constraints the FENM program operates under.)

	5-6 hours	4 hours	3 hours	2 hours	1 hour
Freshmen	0.0%	13.0%	15.2%	45.8%	19.3%
Graduates	17.3%	29.5%	21.6%	14.9%	0.0%
EPNM teachers	3.1%	36.8%	32.5%	23.3%	0.0%

According to Table 1, the largest percentage of graduates and EPNM teachers preferred to have four hours for FENM, with the second largest percentage of the same groups wanting three hours. However, the largest percentage of freshmen wanted only two hours, while the second largest percentage wanted only one. It is interesting that the class time which graduates and teachers thought freshmen needed was much more than what freshmen themselves needed.

This may be because many freshmen did not appreciate English courses very much, as a result of the negative experiences they have had in high schools with English. As the researcher understands, the teaching of English in most high schools in Taiwan has a heavy emphasis on grammar and much testing is used to push students to study hard. There is also great pressure to study English just to prepare for the Joint College Entrance Exams. This might have caused many students to lose interest in learning English. In contrast, the EPNM teachers' and graduates' greater appreciation for **FENM** probably had to do with the fact that they had worked in the professional world, and therefore had a better understanding of the importance of English language skills in Taiwan's work place. Thus, they found it necessary to have more hours for **FENM**.

The 18 **FENM** programs implemented in the 1995 academic year can be divided into the following types according to the number of credits **FENM** carried:

1. 4 credits in both 1st and 2nd semesters: 1 program
   Tsinghua was the only program in which **FENM** carried four credits per semester.

2. 3 credits in both 1st and 2nd semesters: 13 programs
   In 13 programs, **FENM** carried three credits: Soochow, Taiwan U., Chengchi, Chinese Culture, Tamkang, Central U., Chungyuan, Tunghai, Providence, Fengchia, Chunghsing, Chengkung, and NSYSU. Taiwan U. was a special case. At this university, the number of credits carried by the **FENM** course (called **Reading and Writing**) was usually three, but it was flexible. If the teacher required much writing, then the 3-credit course could turn into a 4-credit one.

3. 2, 3, or 4 credits for both 1st and 2nd semesters: 2 programs
   Fujen (A) and Fujen (F+S) were the only two programs that allowed the students' own departments or colleges to decide how many credits **FENM** should carry. For example, Fujen (A) allowed its Music Department to make its **FENM**-a 2-credit course (called **Reading and Writing**) in the first semester, and a 4-credit one in the second (because **Conversation**, a course of 2 credits, was added to the **Reading and Writing** course).

4. 2 credits for both 1st and 2nd semesters: 2 programs
   In two programs, **FENM** carried two credits: Chiaotung and Chungcheng. At Chungcheng, students had to take two out of the eleven 2-credit **FENM** courses in the freshman year.

In order to give students more class time, one program, Tunghai, added one hour of class time to **FENM** (a total of 4 hours) but maintained it as a 3-credit course, as recommended by the MOE. This was the way this program ensured that students get a proper amount of learning time, while staying with the new MOE mandate.

In summary, since the MOE allowed each university to decide on the number of credits **FENM** should carry according to the unique situation at each university, the 18 programs varied in their decisions. Most of them made the course a 3-credit one that lasted two semesters. However, some of them made it a 2-credit course, and this was a drastic change from what it

was before 1993, when **FENM** was a 4-credit course. It appeared that the programs at the universities were becoming more diversified. On the other hand, three programs were unwilling to cut down the number of class hours, perhaps in the belief that English was too important to suffer a reduction in class time. These programs asserted themselves by adding class hours while keeping the number of credits the MOE had recommended. This was an indication of the disagreement between the government and some programs about what was best for students.

In 1995, the **FENM** in 13 out of the 18 programs met for three hours a week, more than what most freshmen wanted and fewer than what graduates and EPNM teachers would like to have. Therefore, there was not a close match between the programs implemented and students' and teachers' expectations about **FENM** class hours. There seemed to be a need to investigate why freshmen were less enthusiastic about **FENM** classes than the teachers and graduates.

Ideal Number of Hours Per Week for FENM Lab Courses

In many programs, the **Freshman Lab** course was offered to help students develop their listening ability. Table 2 shows the number of **FENM Lab** hours considered as ideal by the subjects.

Table 2: Perception of Ideal Number of Hours Per Week for the **FENM Lab** Course
Statement: Please fill in the ideal number of hours for Freshman Lab classes per week: ___ hours. (Please disregard the constraints the FENM program operates under.)

	6 hours	4 hours	3 hours	2 hours	1 hour
Freshmen	0.0%	12.7%	21.4%	41.8%	16.8%
Graduates	9.9%	24.9%	19.9%	28.7%	0.0%
EPNM teachers	0.0%	4.6%	5.9%	61.4%	24.8%

Table 2 shows that the largest percentage of freshmen, graduates, and teachers considered two hours for **Freshman Lab** to be appropriate, as indicated by the respective percentages: 41.8%, 28.7%, and 61.4%. However, the second largest percentage of freshmen (21.4%) and graduates (24.9%) wanted 3 and 4 hours, respectively, and their counterparts in the teacher population wanted only one hour. This suggested that students and graduates appreciated lab classes more than teachers. The former seemed to like using audio-visual media more.

The 18 programs implemented in the academic year of 1995 could be divided into two types in terms of the status they gave the **FENM Lab** course.

1. Programs in which **Freshman Lab** was part of the **FENM** course: 15 programs

In 15 programs, **Freshman Lab** was part of FENM, in the form of a required or elective element.

a. Required: 10 programs

In 10 programs, **Freshman Lab** was required: Soochow, Fujen (A), Chinese Culture, Tamkang, Chungyuan, Tsinghua, Tunghai, Chungcheng, Fengchia, and Chengkung. At

Tamkang, **Freshman Lab** was called **Language Training**. At Chinese Culture, most departments had their students take this lab course for two years, but some only one year. The College of Foreign Languages required their students to take lab for the longest time: four years. Fujen (A) was a complicated case. This program allowed students' own departments to decide whether **Freshman Lab** should be required or not offered at all. The number of credits and hours it carried also varied. For the majority of the departments, **Freshman Lab** was either a 1-credit 2-hour or a 0-credit 2-hour required course in each of the two semesters. However, it was not offered to students in the Department of Applied Fine Arts or Department of Landscaping at all.

b. Required for some departments and elective for others: 3 programs

Three programs made **Freshman Lab** a required course for some departments and an elective (a 2-credit/2-hour course in each of the two semester) for others: Fujen (F+S), Chengchi, and Chunghsing. In the case of Fujen (F+S), it was a one-year required course in the College of Foreign Languages, but an elective in the Colleges of Natural Sciences and Life Science. Students from most departments took it in the freshman year, but some took it in the sophomore year.

c. Elective: 2 programs

Freshman Lab was an elective in two programs: Taiwan U. and Central U..

2. Programs in which **Freshman Lab** was offered as a separate course: 3 programs

In three programs, Chiaotung, Chungcheng, and NSYSU, **Freshman Lab** was offered as a separate elective course. At NSYSU, it was one of the **FENM** courses offered to students. Students could take either this course or the lab course offered by the Foreign Languages and Literature Department (FLLD) for English majors to fulfill the lab requirement.

3. Programs in which **Freshman Lab** was not offered: 1 program

Providence was the only program that did not have **Freshman Lab**. However, the FPNM made up for this by offering **Sophomore Lab** as a required course.

The credits **Freshman Lab** carried varied among the 16 programs that offered it, as shown in the following:

3 credits: 1 program
2 credits: 3 programs
1 credit: 7 programs
0 credit: 4 programs

As shown above, four programs made **Freshman Lab** a 0-credit course, perhaps as a way of adding more class time for students without violating MOE guidelines about the number of credits **FENM** should carry. These programs were Fujen (A), Chungyuan, Tsinghua, and Tunghai.

In addition, among the 16 programs that did offer **Freshman Lab**, 11 of them made the class hours more than the credit hours, in order to allow students more time to learn, as shown below:

0-credit 1-hour: 2 programs

0-credit 2-hour: 2 programs
1-credit 2-hour: 7 programs

An example is Fengchia. Its lab was a 1-credit course (called **Conversational English**), but the class met for two hours per week. The teacher spent one hour on the correction of pronunciation errors and listening comprehension, and the other hour on oral practice.

The way **FENM Lab** was offered at the majority of EPNMs, 2 hours per week, seemed to match what was desired by teachers, graduates, and freshmen very well. Perhaps this practice should be continued in the future.

Programs' Use of Standardized FENM Mid-term and Final Exams and Testing Policies

Table 3 shows the subjects' views about the use of standardized mid-term and final exams in **FENM**.

Table 3: Attitudes Towards Using Standardized Mid-term & Final Exams in **FENM**
Statement: I think the Freshman English program should administer the same mid-term and final exams for all the students at the university.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	4.9%	14.3%	53.2%	27.5%
Graduates	7.5%	16.1%	47.4%	29.1%
EPNM teachers	3.6%	21.6%	35.3%	39.5%

As Table 3 shows, a large majority of freshmen, graduates, and teachers favored not using standardized exams, as indicated by the percentages of subjects who strongly disagreed or disagreed that these exams should be used: 80.7%, 76.5%, and 74.8%, respectively. There did not seem to be a huge differences among the three groups, even though teachers might have favored these exams slightly more than freshmen. Since more and more EPNMs were allowing their teachers to choose their teaching materials, as shown by Huang (1997), it was natural that fewer and fewer of the teachers would be using standardized exams. The trend toward teacher autonomy at universities was making standardized testing less and less popular.

The 18 programs implemented in 1995 could be divided into the following kinds according to whether or not they used standardized mid-term and final exams and whether or not they wanted their teachers to follow guidelines for assessment:

1. Individually-designed mid-terms and finals, with no guidelines: 8 programs

In eight programs, individual teachers designed their own mid-terms and finals and did not follow any guidelines stipulated by their programs or universities, such as limitations on the score range or the weight to be assigned to each exam. These programs were: Fujen (A), Chungyuan, Tsinghua, Chiaotung, Chungcheng, Providence, Chunghsing, and Chengkung. At Tsinghua and Chungcheng, teachers were even allowed to replace mid-term or final exams with reports or other assignments, even though most teachers still gave these exams. At Fujen (A), individual teachers not only designed their own exams but also decided whether to give mid-terms or not, even though they did have to give finals.

2. Individually-designed mid-terms and finals, with guidelines: 7 programs

In seven programs, individual teachers designed their mid-term and final exams but had to follow guidelines given by the programs or universities. These programs were Fujen (F-S), Taiwan U., Chinese Culture, Chengchi, Tamkang, Central U., and NSYSU. At Tamkang, teachers as a group decided the weight each exam should carry. At Chengchi, at the end of each semester, teachers shared information about the percentages of failed students and the grades assigned in each class, and then these teachers decided what adjustment to make on their own grading. However, they were not under any obligation to do so. They also shared their testing methods at meetings, which teachers found valuable. At Central U., the coordinator tried to talk teachers into using the same grading standards (how high or low the grades should be). At Chinese Culture, even though individual teachers designed their own exams, they all followed guidelines on the format of the exams. For example, a certain percentage of the exam had to be devoted to testing vocabulary, or sentence making ability, etc.. At Taiwan U., teachers agreed that most scores should fall between 70 and 85. At the end of each semester, the Office of Studies published each teacher's score average and the highest and lowest scores. This information was distributed to all teachers and posted for all students to see. At Chunghsing, teachers followed a university rule that said that the mid-term and final exams should respectively account for 30% and 40% of the final grades. When a teacher gave extremely high grades, the matter would be brought up for discussion at a meeting. The guidelines for testing mentioned above were probably a way to make testing consistent and thus fair to students in various classes.

3. Fully or partially standardized mid-terms or finals: 3 programs

Fully or partially standardized mid-term or final exams were used by only three programs: Soochow (partially), Tunghai, and Fengchia. At Soochow, the FENM mid-term and final exams were divided into two parts, one on listening and the other on reading. The listening part was further divided into two sections, with the first section (multiple choice questions, 60%) written by teachers collaboratively, and the second (40%) written by individual teachers for their own students. The reading part was designed entirely by individual teachers. At Fengchia, each teacher wrote his her own mid-term exams, but the final exams were prepared by all teachers together. At Tunghai, both the mid-term and final exams were designed by a testing committee. Teachers also had to follow guidelines on the weights to be given to each assessment instrument (mid-term 25%, final 25%, quizzes 10%, oral assignments 15%, writing 15%, and participation 10%).

The number of programs that used standardized exams seemed to be decreasing. At least three programs that used to do so had discontinued this practice. They were Taiwan U., Chengchi, and Chunghsing. The coordinator of Chunghsing said that in the past they used the same textbook and exams. They even graded the exams together and then posted the grades for all teachers to see. This resulted in competition among teachers, which caused negative feelings and even affected some teachers' ways of teaching. As a result, standardized exams were abandoned.

However, the coordinator of Tsinghua indicated that, even though teachers in his program made their own exams without following any guidelines, he was considering setting guidelines in the future, perhaps on the format of the exams (e.g., each exam should contain a section for vocabulary). Even though this had been experimented before and had not been well received

by teachers, the coordinator still believed that such a practice could help ensure the quality of teaching. However, he was aware of the need to achieve a delicate balance between showing respect for teachers by giving them autonomy and ensuring teaching quality.

As the data shows, the majority of the programs seemed to prefer giving teachers complete freedom. This might be a result of the growing trend in most EPNMs to give teachers autonomy in course design and textbook selection, as reported by Huang (1997). Since many teachers determined their own course contents and teaching materials, it would not be feasible to have them use standardized exams. Therefore, most **FENM** programs had become decentralized. This was a break away from the practice adopted by many programs in 1992, when standardized textbooks and exams were commonly used, as reported by Chang (1992).

What was implemented in the majority of the **FENM** programs appeared to match the expectations of freshmen, graduates, and teachers very well. Testing was an area in which there was a happy marriage between expectations and reality.

EPNM Hiring Policies about FENM Teachers' Areas of Expertise

The subjects' attitudes towards what kind of expertise **FENM** teachers should have are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Attitudes Towards Areas of Expertise of **FENM** Teachers
Statement: I think **Freshman English** teachers must have a degree in an area related to ESL or Linguistics.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Freshmen	32.2%	55.8%	11.1%	0.9%
Graduates	28.6%	50.0%	17.9%	3.6%
EPNM teachers	29.2%	32.2%	29.2%	9.4%

As shown in Table 4, of the freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers, respectively 88.0%, 78.6%, and 61.4% strongly agreed or agreed that **FENM** teachers should have a degree related to ESL or Linguistics. Apparently the majority of the three populations, particularly freshmen, believed in the benefit of a degree related to language teaching.

The backgrounds of the **FENM** teachers who worked in the EPNMs in the academic year of 1995 can be categorized into four types: (1) language teaching, (2) linguistics, (3) literature, and (4) others. Areas that focus on the teaching of language as a first or second language fall into the first category. Examples are TESL, TEFL, Language Arts, English Education, and Curriculum and Instruction (with a focus on language arts). Areas such as Theoretical Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, and Practical English fall into the second category. The third category covers areas such as English Literature, American Literature, Drama, Comparative Literature, etc. Areas that do not fall under any of the above are classified as "others." The actual categorization is based on the areas teachers obtained their degrees in. Information about what academic backgrounds **FENM** teachers had and whether these teachers were hired specifically for the needs of the EPNMs, rather than the needs of the FLLDs, is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Academic Backgrounds of FENM Teachers and Relevant EPNM Hiring Policy

	Language teaching	Linguistics	Literature	Others	Hiring Specifically for EPNM
Soochow	37%	26%	37%	0%	No
Fujen (A)	45%	9%	45%	0%	Yes
Fujen (F+S)	18%	24%	37%	21%	Yes
Taiwan U.	14%	12%	62%	12%	No
Chinese Culture	23%	11%	34%	32%	No
Chengchi	?	?	?	?	No
Tamkang	22%	22%	28%	28%	No
Central U.	0%	25%	75%	0%	No
Chungyuan	44%	9%	32%	15%	Yes, prefer TEFL (or TESL) & Applied Linguistics
Tsinghua	33%	25%	25%	17%	No
Chiaotung	18%	9%	36%	36%	Yes
Tunghai	55%	13%	17%	15%	Yes, prefer Language Teaching
Chungcheng	8%	15%	69%	8%	No
Providence	14%	27%	36%	23%	No
Fengchia	27%	34%	23%	15%	Yes, prefer TEFL (or TESL), Linguistics, & Literature
Chunghsing	11%	16%	74%	0%	No
Chengkung	?	?	?	?	No
NSYSU	6%	13%	75%	6%	No
Average	23.1%	18.1%	44.9%	13.9%	

Note. The symbol ? means information was not obtained.

As Table 5 shows, teachers who obtained their degrees in literature were the largest group among teachers in the 18 programs in the 1995 academic year. The second largest group was teachers trained in English language training, the third was those trained in linguistics, and the fourth was those who majored in other fields. Since people who studied in the English departments, either in Taiwan or English-speaking countries, studied literature mostly in the earlier days, and the study of linguistics and TEFL did not become popular until much later, it was not surprising that there were more literature teachers in most programs in 1995. Teachers who received their degrees in subjects other than the three areas mentioned above were the smallest group among teachers. The existence of this group might be explained by the fact that many years ago there was a great shortage of English teachers, and therefore anyone who completed their studies in an English-speaking country was considered as eligible.

The greater number of teachers with a literature background was a result of the hiring policies adopted by the majority of the programs. As Table 5 shows, most programs (12 out of 18) used teachers from the FLLDs, which hired them mainly for the needs of English majors. However, in one program, Tsinghua, some attempts were made to cater to the needs of its EPNM. That is, when Tsinghua hired teachers for its English majors, it considered those who could also teach FENM more favorably. One program, Central U., also began to be aware of the need to hire teachers with language teaching training for its EPNM. The coordinator said

that his program had already had many literature teachers, and there was a need for TEFL teachers in the future. However, some coordinators held different views. The coordinators of Chunghsing and Chinese Culture said their programs had no particular preference for teachers with TEFL degrees. The coordinator of Chinese Culture believed that teaching ability had more to do with teachers' personality or temperament than their areas of specialization.

Only 6 programs (33%) hired specifically for the EPNMs. Since Fengchia did not have an FLLD, its EPNM did not have to consider the needs of the FLLD. Chungyuan was a similar case. Fujen (A) and Fujen (F+S) did not have to compromise their hiring to meet the needs of the FLLD either, since the former were administratively independent from the latter. All of these three programs had a preference for teachers with degrees in language teaching.

Since most **FENM** programs used teachers from the FLLDs, which made their hiring decisions based on the needs of English majors, the needs of the **FENM** programs were not considered seriously. This may reflect the questionable belief in many programs that training in language teaching was not considered important for teaching FENM, and that any teachers who had English language skills were naturally competent English language teachers.

The smaller percentages of teachers with degrees in language teaching and linguistics (23.1% and 18.1%) showed that apparently there was a large gap between the reality in most programs and the expectations of freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers. Since very few teachers leave their programs before time for retirement, this gap would remain there fore a long time. However, according to the researcher's understanding, there are more and more teachers with training in language teaching and applied linguistics now, and there is also a greater awareness that expertise in these areas is important for FENM programs, it is likely that the gap previously mentioned could be narrowed down in the future.

Conclusions and Implications

Since this study involved as many as 17 universities, it should provide a comprehensive view of the kinds of **FENM** programs implemented in Taiwan in the 1995 academic year. The three populations engaged in the survey should also give a rounded picture of the expectations of the people involved in these programs. It is hoped that the findings from this study will not only inform the EPNMs about their curricular problems but also help the MOE assess its policies about foreign language education.

Conclusions

In 1995, the **FENM** in 13 out of the 18 programs carried three class hours a week, which was more than what freshmen wanted and fewer than what graduates and EPNM teachers would like to have. Therefore, there was not a close match between the programs implemented and the programs desired in terms of **FENM** class time.

In the majority of the **FENM** programs (15 out of 18), **Freshman Lab** was part of FENM, mostly in the form of a required component. This suggests that this lab course was considered as helpful to students' acquisition of language skills. Since **FENM Lab** was offered as a 2-hour-per-week course in the majority of EPNMs, what was implemented in most programs

seemed to match what was wanted by teachers, graduates, and freshmen very well.

A large majority of the 18 programs (15 out of 18) gave individual teachers the freedom to decide what methods to use to assess students' performance in FENM classes, even though six of them did have to follow guidelines stipulated by the programs or universities concerning the format of the assessment instruments, the weight each instrument should carry, and the score range. This matched very well with the expectations of freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers.

Concerning the academic backgrounds of FENM teachers, in the 18 programs, more teachers had their degrees in literature than in other areas such as language teaching and linguistics. Most FENM programs actually used teachers from the FLLDs, which made their hiring decisions based on the needs of English majors, rather than the needs of the FENM programs. The smaller percentages of teachers with degrees in language teaching and linguistics showed a large gap in the expectations of students as well as teachers and the reality in most programs.

There seemed to be some matches and mismatches between the FENM programs implemented in Taiwan and the FENM programs desired by the students and teachers involved. This is something for MOE policy makers and EPNM coordinators to think about when designing future programs.

Teaching implications

The following implications for teaching can be drawn from this study. The findings showed that freshmen seemed to want fewer class hours for FENM than what the MOE stipulated, and what these freshmen wanted was also less than what teachers and graduates deemed appropriate. This may suggest that the FENM courses offered in most programs might not have been successful enough to motivate students to want more of these courses. According to other data collected in the needs assessment survey used in this study, most freshmen did believe English was important for them. Therefore, EPNM programs should examine hard the reasons why freshmen did not appreciate FENM courses as much as expected. On the other hand, there appeared to be a better match between the number of FENM Lab hours offered and what teachers and students wanted. In addition, FENM Lab was part of the FENM in the form of a required component in most programs. This practice should probably be continued. In addition, the majority of the programs allowed FENM teachers to make their own mid-term and final exams. This also matched the expectations of freshmen, graduates, and EPNM teachers very closely. Thus, such a testing practice should probably also be recommended for the future. However, this practice inevitably means that teachers will be assuming more responsibilities for their testing. Since some teachers may be weaker in their ability to design effective tests than others, the programs could organize workshops to help weaker teachers do test analysis, so that they can understand the strengths and weaknesses of their tests. Teachers themselves should also constantly upgrade their knowledge and skills in testing, by reading books and journals about assessment issues or attending conferences on relevant themes.

Research implications

According to the findings from this study, a few research implications can be drawn. In future studies about the **FENMs**, researchers could examine a few aspects that have not been delved into in this study, such as the reason why freshmen are less enthusiastic about **FENM** classes than EPNM teachers and graduates, the various testing approaches adopted by **FENM** teachers, the effects of teachers' backgrounds on their teaching styles, etc.. In addition, in order to gain insights into the views held by students and teachers about **FENM** programs, in-depth interviews could be conducted with some subjects in order to bring in qualitative perspectives. It is hoped that more investigations into the **FENMs** in Taiwan will be conducted in the future, and thus the government, programs coordinators, and teachers will be kept up to date about what programs are implemented at a certain point in time and whether these programs match what is desired by the parties involved.

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